

Appln. No 09/810,903
Amendment
Reply to Office Action dated Feb. 26, 2004

Docket No. 6979-1

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

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1 (Currently amended) A method for efficient bulk package delivery for recipients comprising:

- associating an article identifier of a package with an identifier of a destination centralized pickup location;
- grouping a plurality of packages for a plurality of recipients for delivery to [[a]] said destination centralized pickup location based on said association of said article identifier and said destination centralized pickup location identifier;
- delivering said grouped packages in bulk in a single delivery stop to said destination centralized pickup location;
- randomly selecting a storage locker bin from a system of storage locker bins; and
- loading each delivered package into a respective randomly selected storage locker bin; and associating said article identifier of said loaded delivered package with an identifier of said randomly selected storage locker bin.

2. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 1, wherein said step of delivering said packages in bulk for a plurality of recipients further comprises delivering at least one item destined for a recipient.

3 (Previously presented) The method according to claim 2, wherein the step of delivering said packages in bulk comprises sorting at an origination regional distribution center (RDC) location items received from a plurality of retailers delivered to said origination RDC location, said items destined for a plurality of said recipients, said items organized by a common item identifier.

4. (Original) The method according to claim 3, wherein the step of sorting said received items at said origination RDC location further comprises:

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identifying said received items to at least one of a destination centralized pickup location and a destination local distribution hub;

identifying said received items to a destination RDC; and

sorting and grouping said identified received items by said identified destination RDC, said identified received items organized by a common item identifier.

5. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 4, wherein the step of delivering said packages in bulk comprises:

transporting said sorted and grouped items to said identified destination RDC;

sorting at said destination RDC said transported items by said one of a destination centralized pickup location and a destination local distribution hub,

creating, at said destination RDC, said bulk delivered package by organizing said sorted items for a specific request, said sorted items being sorted by one of said destination centralized pickup location and said destination local distribution hub, and

transporting in bulk said created bulk delivered package having said items organized for a specific recipient, to one of said destination centralized pickup location and said destination local distribution hub.

6. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 5, wherein the step of creating said bulk delivered package at said destination RDC location further comprises locating items destined for a specific recipient from items organized by said common item identifier.

7. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 6, further comprising consolidating more than one of said located items destined for said specific recipient, said more than one located items originating from more than one of said plurality of retailers.

8. (Original) The method according to claim 7, further comprising receiving said located items associated with a single order from at least one fulfillment location, said fulfillment location being at least one of a retailer, a manufacturer, a merchant and a supplier.

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9. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 1, wherein the step of randomly loading said bulk delivered package into a system of storage locker bins further comprises:
capturing electronically, an identifier for said bulk delivered package; and
associating said electronically captured identifier of said bulk delivered package with an electronically captured identifier of one of said storage locker bins within said system of storage locker bins

10. (Original) The method according to claim 9, further comprising, retrieving said bulk delivered package created for said specific recipient from a storage locker bin, said retrieving step including authenticating an identity of said recipient prior to at least one of revealing an identity of said storage locker bin and providing access to said storage locker bin

11. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 2, further comprising:
creating a returns package comprising at least one item from at least one of a bulk delivered package retrieved by a recipient and a package delivered to a customer specified address, said returns package destined for a retailer associated with said at least one item; and
delivering in bulk, sorted and grouped returns packages to a returns facility of said associated retailer.

12. (Original) The method according to claim 11, further comprising submitting said returns package for pickup at a destination centralized pickup location.

13. (Previously presented) A method for efficient bulk package delivery for recipients comprising:

delivering said packages in bulk for a plurality of recipients in a single delivery stop to a destination centralized pickup location, and delivering at least one item destined for a recipient;
loading said bulk delivered packages randomly into an automated system of storage locker bins,

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creating a returns package comprising at least one item from at least one of a bulk delivered package retrieved by a recipient and a package delivered to a customer specified address, said returns package destined for a retailer associated with said at least one item;

identifying a returns facility identifier and a returns local market identifier for said returns package based upon an identifier of said retailer,

identifying a regional distribution center (RDC) identifier associated with said returns local market identifier;

submitting said returns package for pickup at a destination centralized pickup location,

transporting said submitted returns package from said destination centralized pickup location of said returns package submission to a destination RDC associated with said destination centralized pickup location of said returns package submission;

sorting and grouping at said associated destination RDC a plurality of transported returns packages by said identified RDC identifier associated with said returns local market identifier for bulk delivery to an origination RDC associated with said identified RDC identifier;

transporting said sorted and grouped returns packages from said associated destination RDC to said associated origination RDC;

sorting at said associated origination RDC said transported returns packages by said identified returns local market identifier of each said returns package;

sorting and grouping at said associated origination RDC said sorted returns package by said identified returns facility identifier of said sorted returns package for bulk delivery to a returns facility associated with said associated returns facility identifier, and

delivering in bulk said sorted and grouped returns packages to said associated returns facility

14. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 1, wherein the step of randomly loading said bulk delivered package into an automated system of storage locker bins comprises automatically triggering the dispatch of an electronic notification to said recipient of said bulk delivered package, said electronic notification having at least an identifier of said destination centralized pickup location.

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15. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 14, wherein said step of automatically triggering the dispatch of said electronic notification further comprises recording information necessary for billing at least one of a customer who ordered an item of said bulk delivered package, said recipient and a retailer, said information including at least one of an order identifier, an ordering customer identifier, a recipient identifier, a customer identifier, a package identifier, a delivery date, a delivery time, a delivery notification date, a delivery notification time, a retrieval date and a retrieval time.

16. (Original) The method according to claim 14, wherein said electronic notification to said recipient comprises, at least one of a facsimile, an email, a telephone call, and a page.

17. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 1, further comprising retrieval of said bulk delivered package by said recipient through self-service

18. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 1, wherein the step of loading said bulk delivered packages randomly into said system of storage locker bins further comprises loading a bulk delivered package into any unoccupied storage locker bin within said system of storage locker bins, said unoccupied storage locker bins having dimensions large enough to accept said bulk delivered package, said system of storage locker bins being configurable.

19. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 1, further comprising controlling a temperature within said bins of said system of storage locker bins by locating said bins in a temperature controlled environment.

20. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 1, wherein said step of delivering said packages in bulk to said destination centralized pickup location further comprises accommodating delivery of said packages in bulk to said destination centralized pickup location from a plurality of different shippers.

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21. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 1, wherein said step of loading said bulk delivered packages randomly into said system of storage locker bins further comprises accommodating loading of said bulk delivered package into said system of storage locker bins from a plurality of different shippers.

22 (Previously presented) The method according to claim 1, wherein said step of delivering said packages in bulk to said destination centralized pickup location further comprises creating a bulk delivered package at a retailer fulfillment site, said bulk delivered package containing at least one ordered item organized for a specific recipient.

23. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 22, further comprising:

- determining one of a specified destination centralized pickup location and a destination local distribution hub for bulk delivery of a bulk delivered package;
- determining a destination RDC for said bulk delivered package;
- transporting said bulk delivered package from said retailer fulfillment site to an origination RDC;
- sorting and grouping at said origination RDC said transported bulk delivered package by said determined destination RDC;
- transporting said bulk delivered package from said origination RDC to said determined destination RDC;
- sorting and grouping for bulk delivery at said determined destination RDC a plurality of transported bulk delivered packages by said determined one of said specified pickup location and said local distribution hub; and
- delivering said bulk delivered packages in bulk from said determined destination RDC to said determined one of said specified pickup location and said local distribution hub.

24. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 1, wherein said step of delivering said bulk delivered packages to said destination centralized pickup location further comprises:

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creating a bulk delivered package at a retailer fulfillment site, said bulk delivered package containing at least one ordered item organized for a specific recipient;

determining one of a specified destination centralized pickup location and a destination local distribution hub for bulk delivery of said created bulk delivered package;

sorting and grouping for bulk delivery at said retailer fulfillment site said bulk delivered package based on said determined one of a specified destination centralized pickup location and a destination local distribution hub; and

delivering in bulk a plurality of said bulk delivered packages from said retailer fulfillment site to said determined one of a specified destination centralized pickup location and a destination local distribution hub.

25. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 1, further comprising:

creating a bulk delivered customer distribution center (CDC) outbound package consisting of at least one item destined for a recipient at one of a specified destination centralized pickup location and a specified address;

submitting said bulk delivered CDC outbound package for pickup at a destination centralized pickup location; and

delivering a plurality of said CDC outbound packages in bulk to one of said specified destination centralized pickup location and a local distribution hub.

26 - 28. (Cancelled)

29. (Currently amended) A system for efficient bulk package delivery for recipients, the system comprising:

associating means for associating an article identifier of a package with an identifier of a destination centralized pickup location;

grouping means for grouping a plurality of packages intended for a plurality of recipients for delivery to [[a]] said destination centralized pickup location based on said association of said article identifier and said destination centralized pickup location identifier;

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delivery means for delivering said grouped packages in bulk in a single delivery stop to said destination centralized pickup location;

~~means for randomly selecting a storage locker bin from a system of storage locker bins from~~
which a storage locker bin is randomly selectable; and

means for loading each delivered packages into a respective randomly selected storage locker bin; and

associating means for associating the article identifier of the loaded delivered package with an identifier of the randomly selected storage locker bin.

30. (Previously presented) The system according to claim 29, wherein said delivery means for delivering of said packages in bulk for recipients further comprises delivery means for delivery of at least one item destined for a recipient.

31 (Previously presented) The system according to claim 30, wherein said delivery means for delivering of said packages in bulk comprises means for sorting at an origination regional distribution center (RDC) location, items received from a plurality of retailers delivered to said origination RDC location, said items destined for a plurality of said recipients, and said items organized by a common item identifier

32. (Original) The system according to claim 31, wherein said means for sorting said received items at said originanon RDC location further comprises:

identification means for identifying said received items to at least one of a destination centralized pickup location and a destination local distribution hub;

identification means for identifying said received items to a destination RDC; and

means for sorting and grouping said identified received items by said identified destination RDC, said identified received items organized by a common item identifier.

33. (Previously presented) The system according to claim 32, wherein said means for delivering said packages in bulk comprises:

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transportation means for transporting said sorted and grouped items to said identified destination RDC;

means for sorting at said destination RDC said transported items by said one of a destination centralized pickup location and a destination local distribution hub;

means for creating said bulk delivered package at said destination RDC by organizing said sorted items for a specific recipient, said sorted items being sorted by one of said destination centralized pickup location and said destination local distribution hub; and

transportation means for transporting in bulk said created bulk delivered package having said items organized for a specific recipient, to one of said destination centralized pickup location and said destination local distribution hub.

34. (Previously presented) The system according to claim 33, wherein said means for creating said bulk delivered package at said destination RDC location further comprises means for locating items destined to a specific recipient from items organized by said common item identifier.

35. (Previously presented) The system according to claim 34, further comprising consolidation means for consolidating more than one of said located items originating from said plurality of retailers, destined for said specific recipient.

36. (Original) The system according to claim 35, further comprising means for receiving said located items associated with a single order from at least one fulfillment location, said fulfillment location being at least one of a retailer, a manufacturer, a merchant and a supplier.

37. (Currently amended) The system according to claim 29, further comprising wherein said means for randomly loading said bulk delivered package into said automated system of storage locker bins, wherein said random loading means comprises:

electronics for electronically capturing an identifier for said bulk delivered package; and

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means for associating said electronically captured identifier of said bulk delivered package with an electronically captured identifier of one of said storage locker bins within said automated system of storage locker bins.

C/ 38. (Original) The system according to claim 37, further comprising, retrieval means for retrieving said bulk delivered package created for said specific recipient from a storage locker bin, said retrieval means having a computing means for authenticating an identity of said recipient prior to at least one of revealing an identity of said storage locker bin and providing access to said storage locker bin.

39. (Previously presented) The system according to claim 30, further comprising:
means for creating a returns package consisting of at least one item from at least one of a bulk delivered package retrieved by a recipient and a package delivered to a customer specified address, said returns package destined for a retailer associated with said at least one item; and
delivery means for delivering in bulk, a plurality of sorted and grouped returns packages to a returns facility of said associated retailer.

40. (Original) The system according to claim 39, further comprising means for submitting said returns package for pickup at a destination centralized pickup location.

41. (Previously presented) A system for efficient bulk package delivery for recipients, the system comprising:
delivery means for delivering said packages in bulk for a plurality of recipients in a single delivery stop to a destination centralized pickup location and for delivery of at least one item destined for a recipient;
a means for randomly loading said bulk delivered packages into an automated system of storage locker bins;

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means for creating a returns package comprising at least one item from at least one of a bulk delivered package retrieved by a recipient and a package delivered to a customer specified address, said returns package destined for a retailer associated with said at least one item;

identification means for identifying a returns facility identifier and a returns local market identifier for said returns package based upon an identifier of said retailer,

identification means for identifying a regional distribution center (RDC) identifier associated with said returns local market identifier;

means for submitting said returns package for pickup at a destination centralized pickup location;

transportation means for transporting said submitted returns package from said destination centralized pickup location of said returns package submission to a destination RDC associated with said destination centralized pickup location of said returns package submission;

means for sorting and grouping at said associated destination RDC said transported returns package by said identified RDC identifier associated with said returns local market identifier for bulk delivery to an origination RDC associated with said identified RDC identifier;

transportation means for transporting said sorted and grouped returns package from said associated destination RDC to said associated origination RDC;

means for sorting at said associated origination RDC said transported returns package by said identified returns local market identifier of said returns package;

means for sorting and grouping at said associated origination RDC said sorted returns package by said identified returns facility identifier of said sorted returns package for bulk delivery to a returns facility associated with said associated returns facility identifier; and

delivery means for delivering in bulk said sorted and grouped returns package to said associated returns facility.

42. (Previously presented) The system according to claim 29, wherein said means for randomly loading said bulk delivered package into said system of storage locker bins comprises electronic circuitry and software for automatically triggering the dispatch of an electronic notification

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to said recipient of said bulk delivered package, said electronic notification having at least an identifier of said destination centralized pickup location

43. (Previously presented) The system according to claim 42, wherein said electronic circuitry and software for automatically triggering the dispatch of said electronic notification further comprises circuitry and associated software for recording information necessary for billing at least one of a customer who ordered an item of said bulk delivered package, said recipient and a retailer, said information including at least one of an order identifier, an ordering customer identifier, a recipient identifier, a customer identifier, a package identifier, a delivery date, a delivery time, a delivery notification date, a delivery notification time, a retrieval date and a retrieval time.

44. (Previously presented) The system according to claim 42, wherein said electronic notification to said recipient comprises at least one of a facsimile, an email, a telephone call, and a page.

45. (Previously presented) The system according to claim 29, further comprising retrieval means for retrieval of said bulk delivered package by said recipient through self-service.

46. (Previously presented) The system according to claim 29, wherein said means for loading said bulk delivered package randomly into said system of storage locker bins further comprises means for loading said bulk delivered package into any unoccupied storage locker bin within said system of storage locker bins, said unoccupied storage locker bins having dimensions large enough to accept said bulk delivered package, said system of storage locker bins being configurable.

47. (Previously presented) The system according to claim 29, wherein said delivery means for delivering said package in bulk to said destination centralized pickup location further comprises means for accommodating delivery of said package in bulk to said destination centralized pickup location from a plurality of different shippers.

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C/ 48. (Previously presented) The system according to claim 29, wherein said means for loading said bulk delivered package randomly into said automated system of storage locker bins further comprises means for accommodating loading of said bulk delivered package into said automated system of storage locker bins from a plurality of different shippers.

49 (Original) The system according to claim 29, wherein said delivery means for delivering said package in bulk to said destination centralized pickup location further comprises, means for creating said bulk delivered package at a retailer fulfillment site, said bulk delivered package containing at least one ordered item organized for a specific recipient

50. (Previously presented) The system according to claim 49, wherein said delivery means for delivering said package in bulk to said destination centralized pickup location further comprises:
means for determining one of a specified destination centralized pickup location and a destination local distribution hub for bulk delivery of said bulk delivered package;

means for determining a destination regional distribution center (RDC) for said bulk delivered package;

transportation means for transporting said bulk delivered package from said retailer fulfillment site to an origination RDC;

means for sorting and grouping at said origination RDC said transported bulk delivered package by said determined destination RDC;

transportation means for transporting said bulk delivered package from said origination RDC to said determined destination RDC;

means for sorting and grouping for bulk delivery at said determined destination RDC a plurality of said transported bulk delivered packages by said determined one of said specified pickup location and said local distribution hub; and

delivery means for delivering said bulk delivered packages in bulk from said determined destination RDC to said determined one of said specified pickup location and said local distribution hub.

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51. (Previously presented) The system according to claim 29, wherein said means for delivering said bulk delivered package to said destination centralized pickup location further comprises:

means for creating said bulk delivered package at a retailer fulfillment site, said bulk delivered package containing at least one ordered item organized for a specific recipient;

means for determining one of a specified destination centralized pickup location and a destination local distribution hub for bulk delivery of said created bulk delivered package;

sorting means for sorting and grouping for bulk delivery at said retailer fulfillment site a plurality of said bulk delivered packages based on said determined one of a specified destination centralized pickup location and a destination local distribution hub; and

delivery means for delivering in bulk said bulk delivered packages from said retailer fulfillment site to said determined one of a specified destination centralized pickup location and a destination local distribution hub.

52. (Previously presented) The system according to claim 29, further comprising:

means for creating bulk delivered customer distribution center (CDC) outbound package consisting of at least one item destined for a recipient at one of a specified destination centralized pickup location and a specified address;

means for submitting said bulk delivered CDC outbound package for pickup at a destination centralized pickup location; and

delivery means for delivering said CDC outbound package in bulk to one of said specified destination centralized pickup location and a destination local distribution hub.

53 - 55. (Cancelled).